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RUEHXS/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HANOI 000839

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS AND DRL/AWH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [HUMANR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: GVN PROPAGANDA AGAINST JAILED DISSIDENTS  
INCREASING

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#### Summary

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¶1. (SBU) Over the weekend, Vietnam aired two television reports on jailed dissident lawyers Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong Nhan, respectively. The Dai expose was unusual for its inclusion of a long "interview" with Dai himself in prison in which he tearfully admitted to taking money from foreign-based "anti-GVN organizations." The Nhan piece was shorter and did not include an interview with her, but said that she is more defiant towards her captors and accused her of planning to sabotage the May 20 National Assembly elections. Neither report linked either dissident with USG funding or with the activities of religious groups. Both made propaganda points which are proving effective in shaping attitudes among the general Vietnamese population here, which continues to be exposed to news reporting on a broad "terrorist" movement to destabilize Vietnam. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On May 4 and May 6, 2007, Vietnam Television (VTV) aired two lengthy television stories on its flagship evening news program detaining charges against jailed dissident lawyers Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong Nhan (full transcripts in paragraphs 5 and 6). Both pieces explicitly claimed to respond to recent House of Representatives' criticism of the GVN's crackdown on political dissent. The introduction for the Dai piece asserted that "Vietnam consistently respects the rights of democratic freedom and that there are none in Vietnam arrested for reasons of expressing their opinions or practicing religions...only violators of the laws are dealt with in accordance with Vietnam's regulations." In addition, the Dai expose was unusual for its inclusion of a prison "interview" with Dai himself in which he admitted wrongdoing. The Nhan piece was shorter and did not include an interview with her, although it included footage of her under interrogation in her prison garb. The report noted that Nhan is "defiant" towards her captors and was planning to sabotage the upcoming (May 20) National Assembly elections.

¶3. (SBU) Both pieces gave detailed accounts of the individuals' arrests, as well as accounts of the monies they received from "anti-GVN organizations" based in the United States and elsewhere. Neither report attempts to link either dissident with USG funding or with the activities of religious groups like the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECVN). However, the report on Dai did make references to specific U.S. non-governmental organizations, such as Boat People S.O.S.

#### Comment

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¶4. (SBU) To the Western mind, these reports appear as heavy-handed propaganda. To the Vietnamese, however, the drumbeat of "evidence"

of foreign involvement, especially in financial support, is proving effective at shaping attitudes here against those recently arrested during the current crackdown. By targeting the premier concern of ordinary Vietnamese -- stability and continued economic growth -- and by portraying those arrested as part of an international plot to destabilize the nation, the regime is scoring some points. Dai's tearful "confession," in particular, is useful in that regard. So far, with one exception, Vietnam's national propaganda apparatus has stopped short of trying to directly tie USG programs to those arrested in the crackdown. This, we assess, is consistent with a desire of Vietnam's top leaders to avoid "demonizing" the United States due to a recognition of the serious damage that could do to a very important bilateral relationship, especially in advance of President Triet's scheduled visit to the United States in June.

#### Transcripts

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15. (SBU) Begin transcript of May 4, 2007, VTV news report on Nguyen Van Dai:

-- Lately, there were a number of elements taking advantage of their democratic rights to violate the laws and policies of the State of Vietnam, undermining social security and stability. The following coverage will help us understand better the true nature of the acts of Nguyen Van Dai, one of such elements to be brought to court in the coming time.

-- This is the image of investigation authorities enforcing the order to put Nguyen Van Dai in temporary detention on March 6, 2007 for his propaganda acts against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. At Dai's office and residence, the authorities seized many propaganda materials which libel the people's government, distort the nation's history of revolutionary cause and orientation and policies of the State and the Party and call for undermining acts against the Twelfth National Assembly election.

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-- In his detention, Nguyen Van Dai admitted his wrongdoings. (Film of Nguyen Van Dai) "I wrote some articles, including 'Right to Form a Party' and 'People's Knowledge,' which were posted on the BBC website. And when responding at some interviews, I expressed my concerns. I also held a number of classes on human rights for students and people that I know. This is just because of my concerns. I did all these without being duly aware that such acts would undermine the State. And I see that the way I expressed my opinion to contribute to the country is not appropriate."

-- Although he admitted his acts like that, Dai still intentionally concealed his true motives. Not having a due awareness of the matter cannot make a good excuse as Dai is a lawyer himself. Furthermore, he was holding the head position of the Thien An Law Office based in Hanoi when he was arrested.

-- This is the letter that Dai wrote requesting extremist and reactionary elements to provide funds as a swap for his joining with them, the Vietnamese reactionaries in exile, to undermine the State of Vietnam and for turning his law office into a reactionary post.

-- Collected data show that Nguyen Van Dai has received a total of USD 60,000 from organizations such as Vietnam Human Rights Network, Democratic Gathering and U.S. based Commission of Vietnamese Boat People Relief (Note: This is likely S.O.S. Boat People Vietnam. End Note.) The Thien An Law Office has not conducted any court services since its establishment. Dai, however, still got the salary of USD 700 every month. These figures show that Dai's true motive is to earn money from reactionary acts against the State.

-- Dai's acts received no support from the public. This is a meeting of residents of Back Khoa Ward, Dai's neighborhood. Even normal people could recognize that Dai's points are distorted ones. (Film of "a resident") "The information that he provided is all negative. Some of them might be true, but are purely minor. The rest are dishonest. As a

saying goes, half a loaf of bread is bread, yet half a truth is a lie. His points are less than half of the truth. But they were exaggerated and distorted before he disseminated them both at home and abroad for reactionary purposes."

-- Regardless of advice from his neighbors and of education efforts given to him by relevant authorities, Nguyen Van Dai plunged himself into breaching the laws. Being arrested and brought to court is an obvious consequence for him.

End Nguyen Van Dai transcript.

16. (SBU) Begin transcript of May 6, 2007 VTV news report on Le Thi Cong Nhan:

-- On March 6, security officers arrested Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong Nhan for their propaganda acts against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Dai and Nhan's violations of the laws are apparent. They negated what they have benefited from the nation and the society and made use of their democratic freedom to undermine the State. Le Thi Cong Nhan, born 1977, grew up in a peaceful time of the country. She was educated to become a lawyer. However, she wrongfully used the title to conduct acts to damage the security and stability of Vietnam.

-- Le Thi Cong Nhan was arrested after being caught in the act when she was using Thien An Law Office to conduct illegal propaganda of human rights and democratic freedom values to a number of students and young people, compile and disseminate materials distortedly condemning the State and the Party of violating democratic and human rights and repressing political dissidents and call for acts of sabotage on the occasion of the 12th National Assembly election.

-- In her detention, Le Thi Cong Nhan still maintained her defiant attitude towards Vietnamese law protection authorities. She called herself "democratic activist" and took it as an excuse for her acts which opposed the State and threatened social security. Nhan was one of the first to join the reactionary 8406 Group established by (Father) Nguyen Van Ly. She volunteered to be spokesperson for the Vietnam Progression Party and induced her friends and relatives to participate in various political organizations formulated by Vietnamese reactionary exiles or domestic opponents. Incomplete statistics collected by security authorities revealed that Nhan received USD 2,300, 300 Australian dollars, 200 Euros, 2 million VND and a quantity of medicine and other equipment from Vietnamese exiled reactionaries. By and large, her motive is no different from that of other elements that were already kept in detention for their opposing acts against the State of Vietnam such as Nguyen Van Dai and Nguyen Van Ly.

End Le Thi Cong Nhan Transcript.

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MARINE